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Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Free rides and beer: Incentives are added to vaccine drive

By CARLA K. JOHNSON and
MICHELLE R. SMITH

Associated Press

Free beer, pot and doughnuts. Savings bonds. A chance to win an all-terrain vehicle. Places around the U.S. are offering incentives to try to energize the nation's slowing vaccination drive and get Americans to roll up their sleeves.

These relatively small corporate promotion efforts have been accompanied by more serious and far-reaching attempts by officials in cities such as Chicago, which is sending specially equipped buses into neighborhoods to deliver vaccines. Detroit is offering \$50 to people who give others a ride to vaccination sites, and starting Monday will send workers to knock on every door in the city to help residents sign up for shots.

Public health officials say the efforts are crucial to reach people who haven't been immunized yet, whether because they are hesitant or because they have had trouble making an appointment or getting to a vaccination site.

"This is the way we put this



ABOUT THE BENNIES

In this Tuesday, April 20, 2021, file photo, a man wearing a cannabis costume hands out marijuana cigarettes in New York during a "Joints for Jabs" event, where adults who showed their COVID-19 vaccination cards received a free joint.

Associated Press

pandemic in the rearview mirror and move on with our lives," said Dr. Steven Stack, Kentucky's public health commissioner.

Meanwhile, more activi-

ties are resuming around the U.S. as case numbers come down. Disneyland is set to open Friday after being closed for over a year, while Indianapolis is plan-

ning to welcome 135,000 spectators for the Indy 500 at the end of May. Still, rising hospitalizations and caseloads in the Pacific Northwest prompted Or-

egon's governor to impose restrictions in several counties, and her Washington counterpart was expected to follow suit.

Continued on next page

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Continued from Front

Demand for vaccines has started to fall around the country, something health officials expected would happen once the most vulnerable and most eager to get the shot had the opportunity to do so. Now the vaccination drive is moving into a new, more targeted phase.

"This will be much more of an intense ground game where we have to focus on smaller events, more tailored to address the needs and concerns of focused communities," Stack said. Nationally, 82% of people over 65 and more than half of all adults have received at least one dose of vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But while vaccinations hit a high in mid-April at 3.2 million shots per day on average, the number had fallen to 2.5 million as of last week. As demand slows to a trickle at mass vaccination sites such as stadiums, some state and local governments are no longer asking for their full allotment of vaccine from Washington.

And many large vaccination sites and pharmacies are letting people walk in, no appointment necessary. The slowdown in the U.S. stands in stark contrast to the situation in the many poorer corners of the world that are desperate for vaccine.

Demand has dropped precipitously in the rugged timberland of northeastern Washington state, where Matt Schanz of Northeast Tri County Health District is at a loss for what to try next. Seventy-six percent of residents remain unvaccinated in Pend Oreille County and 78% in Ferry County, and a whopping 80% in Stevens County have not had even one shot. On Wednesday, only 35 people in all three counties



In this April 13, 2021, file photo, Brent Houzenga receives the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine from volunteer RN Maggie Baker, during a vaccine event hosted by Nola Ready, where people received a free drink at the bar if they received a COVID-19 vaccine, at The Howling Wolf, a music venue and bar, in New Orleans.

Associated Press

booked a first dose through the health agency, down from a peak of 500 daily appointments a few weeks ago.

Schanz ticks off the efforts so far in the three counties where he is the health agency's administrator: Newspaper ads, signs and mailers sent with utility bills. Drive-thru vaccination sites at fairgrounds and fire stations. A call center and online scheduling. Outreach to pastors, Republican elected leaders, employers in the lumber industry and an aluminum boat manufacturer. TV and radio interviews.

"Have we reached that point of saturation?" Schanz asked.

"How many people do we have who are going

to be the hard no's, and how many are the hesitators and the wait-and-see folks?"

Uncertainty about the vaccine is the biggest barrier, he said: "People say, 'Jeez, I don't want to be a government experiment.'"

Chicago officials are planning vaccination sites at festivals and block parties and are working with barber shops and hair and nail salons to pair free services with vaccination.

"The idea here is to bring the party, bring the vaccine and really have this be a convenient way for people to get vaccinated," Chicago Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady said.

Several companies have announced that employ-

ees can take paid time off to get vaccinated. In Houston, 31-year-old Elissa Hanc works for one of them, 3 Men Movers.

Her employer started offering the benefit before President Joe Biden announced a tax credit for small businesses to provide paid time off for those getting vaccinated or recovering from the side effects.

"I have a few friends who work where management is not making it a priority to get the vaccine," Hanc said. "They've let me know in no uncertain terms how lucky I am to work where I

do."

Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, said that employers should give paid time off and that other incentives are needed to boost vaccinations. He pointed to West Virginia, which is giving \$100 savings bonds to young adults who get their shot.

"We also need health systems and universities to mandate vaccination — that no one can be employed or on campus/medical facilities without having been vaccinated," Topol said in an email. He also said the nation needs to mount a "counteroffensive" against anti-vaccination websites and activists. Other companies are getting into the spirit with marketing pitches.

Krispy Kreme began offering a free doughnut a day to anyone showing proof of having been vaccinated. In Cleveland, a movie theater is supplying free popcorn through the end of this month.

Several marijuana dispensaries around the country are giving out cannabis treats or free rolled joints. On April 20, marijuana advocates offered "joints for jabs" to encourage people to get vaccinated in New York City and Washington. Some breweries around the country are offering "shots and a chaser."

In Alaska, which traditionally has low vaccine confidence, the Norton Sound Health Corp., with a hospital in Nome and 15 clinics across western Alaska, has given away prizes, including airline tickets, money toward the purchase of an all-terrain vehicle, and \$500 for groceries or fuel. □

In conjunction with Dag van de Arbeid (Labor Day), Aruba Today will not be published on Saturday, May 1st, 2021. We will resume our regular printing schedule on Monday, May, 3rd, 2021.

An unusual coalition as Supreme Court rules for immigrant

By MARK SHERMAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An unusual coalition of Supreme Court justices joined Thursday to rule in favor of an immigrant fighting deportation in a case that the court said turned on the meaning of the shortest word, "a."

By a 6-3 vote, the court sided with Agusto Niz-Chavez, a Guatemalan immigrant who has been in the United States since 2005. Eight years later, he received a notice to appear at a deportation hearing but this notice did not include a date or time. Two months after that, a second notice instructed him when and where to show up.

By sending notice of a deportation hearing, the government can stop the clock on immigrants hoping to show they have been in the United States for at least 10 straight years. The 10-year mark makes it easier under federal law to ask to be allowed to remain in the country.

The court was deciding whether immigration officials had to include all the



In this June 29, 2020 file photo, the Supreme Court is seen on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

relevant information in a single notice.

Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in his majority opinion that they do, criticizing the government's "notice by installment."

Two other conservative justices, Clarence Thomas and Amy Coney Barrett, signed on, as did the court's three liberal members, Ste-

phen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor. The case was argued in November during the Trump administration.

"Anyone who has applied for a passport, filed for Social Security benefits, or sought a license understands the government's affinity for forms. Make a mistake or skip a page? Go

back and try again, sometimes with a penalty for the trouble. But it turns out the federal government finds some of its forms frustrating too," Gorsuch wrote.

A 1996 immigration law specifies "a notice to appear" for people the government wants to deport, Gorsuch said.

"At first blush, a notice to

appear might seem to be just that — a single document containing all the information an individual needs to know about his removal hearing. But, the government says, supplying so much information in a single form is too taxing. It needs more flexibility, allowing its officials to provide information in separate mailings (as many as they wish) over time (as long as they find convenient)," he wrote.

Gorsuch acknowledged that a lot seemed to be hanging on one word, but he said the court's role is to make sure the executive branch does not exceed the power Congress gave it.

"Interpreting the phrase 'a notice to appear' to require a single notice — rather than 2 or 20 documents — does just that," he wrote.

In dissent, Justice Brett Kavanaugh — an appointee of President Donald Trump along with Gorsuch and Barrett — called Gorsuch's conclusion "rather perplexing as a matter of statutory interpretation and common sense." □

White farmers sue seeking government loan forgiveness

By TODD RICHMOND

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A group of Midwestern farmers sued the federal government Thursday alleging they can't participate in a COVID-19 loan forgiveness program because they're white.

The group of plaintiffs includes farmers from Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota and Ohio. According to the lawsuit, the Biden administration's COVID-19 stimulus plan provides \$4 billion to forgive loans for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who are Black, American Indian, Hispanic, Alaskan native, Asian American or Pacific Islander.

White farmers aren't eligible, amounting to a violation of the plaintiffs' constitutional rights, the lawsuit contends.

"Were plaintiffs eligible for the loan forgiveness bene-

fit, they would have the opportunity to make additional investments in their property, expand their farms, purchase equipment and supplies, and otherwise support their families and local communities," the lawsuit said. "Because plaintiffs are ineligible to even apply for the program solely due to their race, they have been denied the equal protection of the law and therefore suffered harm."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a statement saying it was reviewing the lawsuit with the U.S. Department of Justice, but that the USDA plans to continue to offer loan forgiveness to "socially disadvantaged" farmers.

Attorneys for the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty filed the action on the white farmers' behalf in federal court in Green Bay.

The filing seeks a court order prohibiting the USDA from applying racial classifications when determining eligibility for loan modifications and payments under the stimulus plan. It also seeks unspecified damages.

Minority farmers have maintained for decades that they have been unfairly denied farm loans and other government assistance. The USDA in 1999 and 2010 settled lawsuits from Black farmers accusing the agency of discriminating against them.

Still, less than 2% of direct loans from the Trump administration in 2020 went to Black farmers. And some Black farmers have criticized Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack for failing to address a backlog of discrimination complaints and failing to hire minorities for high-level positions.



In this Dec. 4, 2017, file photo, a farmer harvests crops near Sinsinawa Mound in Wisconsin.

Associated Press

Vilsack, who served under President Barack Obama and returned to the role after President Joe Biden took office, said in a statement last month that generations of socially disadvantaged farmers have suffered due to systemic discrimination and a cycle of debt. He

has been trying to assure minority farming groups and senators who will vote on his confirmation that he will work to stem racism within the USDA.

Civil rights advocates have hailed Biden's stimulus plan as a means of finally helping farmers of color. □

Sheriff: Suspect, 2 others in family among dead in standoff

BOONE, N.C. (AP) — A married couple found dead along with the suspected gunman after a 13-hour standoff at a North Carolina home were all members of the same family, a sheriff's office said Thursday.

The Watauga County Sheriff's Office said George Wyatt Ligon, 58, and Michelle Annette Ligon, 61, were killed inside their home in Boone on Wednesday.

The sheriff's office said Thursday that the suspect in their deaths, Isaac Alton Barnes, 32, also was found dead at the home. Barnes was identified as Michelle Ligon's son and George Ligon's stepson.

Authorities said Barnes also was suspected in the fatal shootings of two deputies dispatched to the home, Sgt. Chris Ward and K-9 Officer Logan Fox. Ward was taken from the home and died at a hospital Wednesday.

Fox died at the scene, the sheriff's office said.

"The individual suspected of killing the two officers is also suspected of killing two civilians in the residence," the statement said. Sheriff Len Hagaman said they were the suspect's mother



In this image taken from video Wednesday, April 28, 2021, law enforcement work the scene of a fatal shooting outside a home in Boone N.C.

Associated Press

and stepfather, WSOC-TV reported.

A Boone Police officer, a Boone firefighter and an Appalachian State University police officer were shot at during an initial attempt to rescue the deputies, and the Boone police officer was hit, but he escaped injury to his Kevlar helmet equipment, Hagaman told WSOC.

Morganton Department

of Public Safety Maj. Ryan Lander told The News Herald just before 11 p.m. that the suspect appeared to have killed himself, the newspaper reported.

Hagaman said Ward died at a hospital in Johnson City, Tennessee.

"This is an incredibly tragic situation and our thoughts and prayers are with everyone involved as well as their families and our com-

munity," Hagaman said. "I greatly appreciate the tremendous support we are receiving from law enforcement agencies across the region and the state." The sheriff's office said officers from approximately 15 law enforcement agencies surrounded the home. Other people living nearby were evacuated or told to shelter in place as the standoff lasted throughout

the day and Wednesday night.

Clarence Wilson, 78, was on his porch when deputies pulled up in front of the house across the street. Gunfire erupted after the deputies arrived, Wilson said.

"Then they told me to get back in the house and stay," he said.

Wilson said he later saw officers pull a man from the house.

"I don't know if it was a deputy or who it was," he said. "I was just worried about keeping myself safe."

Wilson said he heard a second barrage of gunfire around noon as the house remained surrounded.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said he spoke with the sheriff to offer support and express his condolences.

"We grieve for Sgt. Chris Ward, K-9 Deputy Logan Fox and the entire Watauga County law enforcement community today," Cooper tweeted. "These horrific shootings that claimed lives and loved ones show the ever-present danger law enforcement can encounter in the line of duty." □

Panel: Remove Fulbright statue, name from Arkansas campus



A statue of J. William Fulbright stands, Wednesday, July 1, 2020, near the west entrance of Old Main on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville, Ark.

Associated Press

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. (AP) — A University of Arkansas committee says tributes honoring a former senator, alum and segregationist whose beliefs did not align with the values of the institution

today should be removed from campus.

The committee considered J. William Fulbright's stance on integration and civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s before recommend-

ing his statue be removed and his name stripped from the university's arts and sciences college, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported.

Fulbright was a UA graduate and served as the university's president for three years starting in 1939. He is known worldwide for creating an international education scholarship in his name. "There was a time when Black students were not welcome on our campus," the committee said following its review of Fulbright's legacy. "J. William Fulbright, while senator, voted against the interests of Black students, and supported values antithetical to the university. For many, the statue is a memorial to those segregationist values and a daily reminder to our

Black students of that time." The committee — comprising students, alumni, faculty and staff — also recommended the name of former Arkansas Gov. Charles Brough be removed from a campus dining hall due to his role in the 1919 Elaine Massacre, one of the largest racial mass killings in U.S. history.

"The committee recognizes that these recommendations alone will not transform the University of Arkansas into a wholly equitable and antiracist campus. Nonetheless, public memorials, statues and dedications need to be changed if they reinforce historic racism," the committee stated. In a statement posted Wednesday on the university's website, Chancellor Joe Steinmetz said the

university would gather feedback and consider input and perspectives from other university stakeholders, including faculty, staff, alumni and students.

The feedback would conclude in late May and any changes would need to be approved by the university system's board of trustees, the statement said.

"This matter is complicated by Sen. Fulbright's deep connections to the state and university, and important international contributions, at the same time acknowledging that the name causes pain for some on our campus, which is unfortunate," Steinmetz said. Sen. Mark Johnson warned that a bill that has yet to be signed into law would restrict the removal of public monuments. □

Court: Germany must share climate burden between young, old

BERLIN (AP) — In a ruling hailed as groundbreaking, Germany's top court said Thursday the government must set clear goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions after 2030, arguing that existing legislation risks placing too much of a burden for curbing climate change on younger generations.

The verdict was a victory for climate activists from Germany and elsewhere who — with the support of environmental groups — had filed four complaints to the Constitutional Court arguing that their rights were at risk by the lack of sufficient targets beyond the next decade.

Like other European Union countries, Germany aims to cut emissions 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. Legislation passed two years ago set specific targets for sectors such as heating and transport over that period, but not for the long-term goal of cutting emissions to "net zero" by 2050.

The 2019 regulations "irreversibly pushed a very high burden of emissions reduction into the period after 2030," judges said in their ruling.

The court backed the argument that the 2015 Paris climate accord's goal of keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), ideally no more than 1.5 C (2.7 F), by the end of the century compared with pre-industrial times should be a benchmark for policymakers. It ordered the German government to come up with new targets from 2030 onward by the end of



A coal-fired RWE power plant steams on a sunny day in Neurath, Germany, Thursday, April 29, 2021.

Associated Press

next year.

In a striking precedent, the court also acknowledged the idea that Germany has a finite emissions "budget" before the Paris goal becomes impossible. While it didn't specify what Germany's share of the global carbon budget is, scientists have said at current rates of emission it could be used up in less than a decade. Lawyer Felix Ekdert, who brought one of the cases, called the verdict "ground-breaking" for Germany.

"Germany's climate policy will need to be massively adjusted," he told reporters. Fellow lawyer Roda Verheyen said the decision would likely mean Germany's plans to phase out coal use by 2038 would need to be brought forward, in order to realistically achieve the country's long-term emissions target. "A simple calculator shows that this will be necessary," she said.

Germany has managed

to cut its annual emissions from the equivalent of 1.25 billion tons of carbon dioxide in 1990 to about 740 million tons last year — a reduction of more than 40%. The current target would require cuts of 178 million tons by 2030, but a reduction of 281 million tons in each of the following decades.

Judges said it would be wrong to allow one generation "to use up large parts of the CO₂ budget with a comparatively mild reduction burden, if that simultaneously means following generations are left with a radical reduction burden and their lives are exposed to comprehensive limits to freedom."

Climate activists expressed delight at the verdict.

"With today's decision, generational justice has been achieved," said plaintiff Luisa Neubauer, a member of the Fridays for Future group. "Because our future freedoms and rights aren't less important than

the rights and freedoms of today's generation."

Germany's main industry lobby group, BDI, called for transparent and feasible targets to give companies the certainty needed to plan and develop new technologies and make the necessary investments required to shift from fossil fuels to carbon-free alternatives. Environment Minister Svenja Schulze said after the verdict that she would propose new measures for Europe's biggest economy in the coming months.

The court's unanimous ruling plays into the hands of the environmentalist Greens party, which is leading in several polls ahead of Germany's national election on Sept. 26.

Annalena Baerbock, the Greens' candidate to succeed Angela Merkel as chancellor, called for "concrete action, here and now."

She said the Greens want to double the rate by which

wind parks, solar farms and other sources of renewable energy sources are expanded over the next five years, ban the sale of new combustion engine vehicles starting in 2030, bring forward the deadline to end coal use and set additional emissions targets after 2030.

Britain earlier this month announced it will aim to cut its emissions 78% from 1990 levels by 2035, the most ambitious target of any industrialized nation. The U.K. hosts this year's international climate summit in Glasgow in November.

Christiana Figueres, who as U.N. climate chief was instrumental in negotiating the Paris accord, said the German court's unanimous verdict made clear the need to speed up efforts to reduce emissions.

"We need to focus on shorter-term mitigation and emission reductions," she said, adding that this urgency was reflected in last week's climate summit organized by President Joe Biden, who announced a doubling of the U.S. target for 2030, now aiming to cut emissions 52% from 2005 levels. □

The legal cases in Germany are part of a global effort by climate activists to force governments to take urgent action to tackle climate change.

One of the first successful cases was brought in the Netherlands, where the Supreme Court two years ago confirmed a ruling requiring the government to cut emissions at least 25% by the end of 2020 from benchmark 1990 levels. □

Dutch city fined for Wi-Fi tracking says it will appeal

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch privacy watchdog said Thursday it has fined the eastern city of Enschede for tracking people using mobile phone Wi-Fi signals in a system used to measure crowds. The city's municipality said it is appealing the ruling and 600,000-euro (\$730,000) fine.

The Dutch Data Protection Authority said that Enschede used sensors to register Wi-Fi signals from phones as a way of establishing how busy it was in the city center. It said that "if you monitor for a longer time which telephone passes

which sensor, then counting changes into tracking people."

The government watchdog said the breach of privacy laws began in May 2018 and the municipality halted the system on May 1, 2020.

The authority said that Enschede did not intend to follow individuals and it had no indication that tracking had happened, "but deploying Wi-Fi tracking that makes this possible is in itself a serious breach" of the Dutch privacy law.

Enschede mayor Onno van Veldhuizen said the municipality feels "unjustly punished for

something that we did not intend and which actually did not happen." He added: "Guaranteeing the privacy of our visitors to the city center has been a condition from the start."

But the data protection authority's vice president, Monique Verdier, said there was an important principle at stake.

"It is not intended that anyone can track which shop, doctor, church or mosque we visit. That is and must remain private. So that people can be themselves, without feeling inhibited by possible registration," she said. □

China says population grew in 2020 after report of decline

BEIJING (AP) — China's population grew last year, the government said Thursday, following a report that a census might have found a surprise decline, possibly adding to downward pressure on economic growth. The National Bureau of Statistics gave no details in its one-sentence statement and said the population figure would be reported later. But the unusual decision to respond to the report by The Financial Times reflected the issue's political sensitivity.

The Financial Times said people familiar with China's 2020 census expect it to show the population, which edged above 1.4 billion in 2019, declined for the first time since famine in 1959-61 killed millions of people.

The ruling Communist Party has enforced birth limits to restrain population growth since 1980, but an outright fall would reduce the flow of workers into the economy when it is trying to shore up growth and reduce poverty.

"According to our understanding, in 2020, China's population continued to grow," the NBS said on its website.

China's population has long been expected to peak and decline in line



A man holds a child for photos near a cherry blossom tree in Beijing on Wednesday, March 24, 2021.

Associated Press

with trends in South Korea and other developing Asian economies. But researchers say China's decline might start before it reaches their income levels.

Developed economies such as Japan and Germany also are trying to figure out how to support aging populations with shrinking workforces. But they can draw on decades of investment in factories, technology and foreign assets, while China has less wealth and its industries need young

workers. Researchers at the Chinese central bank argued in a report in March that the birth rate is lower than official estimates suggest, though they didn't say total population had declined. To avert a labor shortage, they said, Beijing needs to make it easier and cheaper to raise children.

"Compared with developed countries, the demographic transition happened faster in our country, the transition period is

shorter, and aging problems and sub-replacement fertility are severer," the report said.

Already, China's population of potential workers aged 15 to 59 has shrunk from its 2011 peak of 925 million, according to government data. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said in 2016 that the group might shrink to 700 million by 2050. China's population rose by 4.7 million people in 2019 to just above 1.4 billion,

according to government data. That was growth of just 0.3%.

"If China's population is peaking already, that may not change much about the outlook this decade, but it could have major economic implications further ahead," Mark Williams, chief Asia economist for Capital Economics, said in a report.

The International Monetary Fund is forecasting Chinese economic growth of 8.4% this year following a rebound from the coronavirus pandemic. The ruling party says it wants to double output per person from 2020 levels by 2035, which would require annual growth of about 4.7%. China is on track to be overtaken by India before 2025 as the most populous country.

China still has a bigger workforce, but India's forecast total of just over 1 billion in 2035 will be 120 million more than China, the central bank report said. It said India's lead would swell to 270 million workers by 2050.

China's ruling party is making changes, but it isn't clear whether they can reverse a long-term decline in worker numbers and strain on an underfunded retirement system. □

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan trade blame for cross-border shelling

MOSCOW (AP) — Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan traded blame Thursday for cross-border shelling and clashes that left at least four people dead and dozens injured in a conflict over water supply, the latest outburst of tensions between the two ex-Soviet Central Asian neighbors. Troops from the two countries exchanged gunfire for most of the day around a water supply facility near the village of Kok-Tash in Kyrgyzstan's western Batken region on the border with Tajikistan. More than 800 Kyrgyz residents were evacuated from several

villages engulfed by the clashes.

Later Thursday, officials from the two countries declared a cease-fire and agreed to pull back troops from the area.

Kyrgyzstan's Health Ministry said one person died and 45 others were injured in the clashes, according to the Tass news agency.

In Tajikistan, the mayor's office in the nearby city of Isfara said three Tajiks were killed and 31 were injured, including the mayor who received a gunshot wound, the RIA-Novosti news agency reported. Kyrgyzstan's border guard

service said Tajik troops shelled several Kyrgyz border checkpoints, setting one ablaze. In retaliation, Kyrgyz troops seized a Tajik checkpoint, it said. Kyrgyz media released video showing Kyrgyz men taking cover as automatic gunfire rang out. Amid the clashes, Kyrgyzstan's President Sadyr Zhaparov met with top officials to discuss the situation.

A large part of the Tajik-Kyrgyz border has remained unmarked, fueling fierce disputes over water, land and pastures. Kyrgyz and Tajik delegations have held several rounds of talks



In this file photo taken on Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021, Kyrgyzstan President Sadyr Zhaparov holds presidential standard during his inauguration ceremony in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Associated Press

in recent years but have failed to end the controversy.

Tajikistan's National Security Committee said Kyrgyz troops opened fire on Tajik border guards first and ac-

cused Kyrgyzstan of trying to forcefully take over the area, which Tajikistan sees as part of its territory. It said seven Tajiks were injured by stones hurled by the Kyrgyz. □

Watchdog: U.S. aid to Venezuela driven by more than just need

MIAMI (AP) — It was billed as the beginning of the end for Nicolás Maduro. With foreign leaders in tow and the world watching, anti-Maduro activists gathered in Colombia in February 2019 with the aim of pushing entire warehouses worth of aid — flown in on U.S. military cargo planes — across the border into Venezuela. Instead, the humanitarian convoy was violently blocked by security forces loyal to Maduro — the first in a series of miscalculations in the Trump administration's policy toward Venezuela. More than two years later, the risky gambit is being questioned by a U.S. government watchdog. A new report by the inspector general at the U.S. Agency for International Development raises doubts about whether the deployment of aid was driven more by the U.S. pursuit of regime change than by technical analysis of needs and the best ways to help struggling Venezuelans.

The findings were published April 16 but have not been previously reported.

The report focuses on the frenzied few months after opposition leader Juan Guaidó rose up to challenge Maduro's rule, quickly winning recognition as Venezuela's rightful leader by the U.S. and dozens of allies. As part of that effort, USAID between January and April 2019 spent \$2 million to position 368 tons of emergency supplies on the Caribbean island of Curacao and on the Colombia-Venezuela border.

Under Guaidó's orders, the aid was supposed to be delivered into Venezuela in defiance of Maduro, who condemned the effort as a veiled coup attempt. But when an opposition-organized caravan that tried to enter Venezuela was blocked at the border, at least one truck caught fire, destroying \$34,000 worth of U.S.-supplied aid.

As media attention turned away and Guaidó's fight to unseat Maduro unraveled in the months that followed, the U.S. assistance was quietly repurposed.



In this Feb. 23, 2019 file photo, charred trucks that were part of a humanitarian aid convoy attempting to cross into Venezuela sit parked on the Francisco de Paula Santander international bridge in Cúcuta, Colombia.

Associated Press

In the end, only eight tons ever reached Venezuela, with the remaining 360 tons distributed inside Colombia or shipped to Somalia, the report found.

The report said the U.S. deployment of aid responded in part to the Trump administration's campaign to pressure Maduro rather than just coming to the aid of struggling Venezuelans.

For example, the assistance was needlessly delivered in giant Air Force C-17 cargo planes instead of cheaper commercial options that were available, the report said. Ready-to-use meals to fight child malnutrition were also sent even though USAID's own experts had decided the nutritional status of Venezuelan children didn't warrant its use at the time, investigators said.

To bolster Guaidó, USAID — believing U.N. agencies had been co-opted by Maduro — minimized funding to the United Nations even though some U.N. agencies had infrastructure inside Venezuela to distribute the aid. A Venezuelan nonprofit organization, which isn't identified by name in the report, was awarded funding partly based on its alignment with U.S. foreign policy interests even though doubts persisted about whether it could meet the agency's legal and financial requirements.

The "directive to pre-po-

sition humanitarian commodities was not driven by technical expertise or fully aligned with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and being based on needs assessments," the report says. While international aid workers at the time issued similar warnings about the risks of assistance being politicized — the aid convoy in Colombia was preceded by a "Venezuela Live Aid" concert organized by billionaire Richard Branson — the findings of a U.S. agency tasked with auditing how U.S. tax dollars are spent carries additional weight.

The report, which was nearly two years in the making, was prepared to address challenges and "fraud risks" in USAID's response to the Venezuelan crisis. It contains six recommendations to improve coordination across the sprawling agency — the main vehicle for U.S. foreign assistance — and strengthen controls to avoid politicizing humanitarian action. A USAID spokesperson said the agency welcomed the report's findings, which it is implementing, and all efforts to improve the effectiveness of USAID's work, especially in challenging environments.

Many of the decisions came from the office of then-USAID Administrator Mark Green, according to the report.

USAID. The former official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal decision making. Green, in a statement, said he was proud of USAID's work to help Venezuelans in desperate need of assistance with bipartisan support from Congress.

"The Venezuelan crisis is one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world under the most challenging conditions where the illegitimate Maduro regime continues to place obstacles that prevent basic necessities for the Venezuelan people," said Green, who is now president of the Woodrow Wilson Center, a non-partisan think tank based in Washington.

"The Venezuelan crisis is a destabilizing force that impacts the entire region and assistance continues to be needed to help save lives."

Whatever mistakes were made, the Trump administration's actions — coinciding with Venezuela's economic collapse — were key in pushing other governments and humanitarian groups to focus on the country's plight. □



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Harbour House Aruba: “80 % sold already, we are doing great”

ORANJESTAD — Boosting a buyers confidence comes with a strong sales team, an established company name and experience. The Perret Group are the owners of among others Harbour House Aruba and they live up to the expectation. With 80 % of the condominiums sold in their residence they can do nothing more but be content. Take a look at this cool site reflecting best of two worlds: beach and city.

The residence consists of 94 units in the former 7-level Marazul building at the historical location of Paardenbaai. Harbour

House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. Harbour House's sales manager explains why. “A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool.”

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your



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money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on beforehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website, it is a lot easier.

“There are only a few units left, now we are working on the amenities like the pool that is almost finished. We are installing the Jacuzzi area on top and we have all the exterior windows in so we are right on schedule, expecting to deliver in September,” the sales manager explains.

The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. “When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$30.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what

you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. We assist also in financing by banks.”

The ground level of the building will provide a gallery of restaurants, art gallery, stores, and supermarket. “We get in more requests for renting and so far we have restaurant, salon, mini market, art gallery a craft beer factory which makes up for a great variation. A parking lot will be assigned to the owners and visitors.”

City elegance combined with tropical tranquility is what you get here. The panoramas are breathtaking. Can you imagine yourself with your favorite cup of joe, gazing out over the ocean while the city of Oranjestad is awakening? The new trend is to live tinier but comfy and Harbour House meets this market demand with the perfect product. Everything is close, you are centrally located, just a step away from the beach though right in the main area in Oranjestad. You have history to tell and you are within walking distance to all Oranjestad has to offer. What else do you need? □

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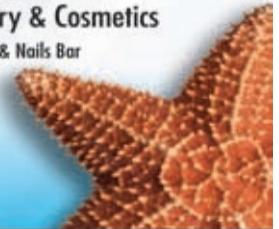


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Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa debuts luxurious Hospitality Lounge



EAGLE BEACH — The intimate boutique resort recently opened a brand-new Hospitality Lounge in the rejuvenated and spacious open-air lobby.

During past year's downtime Manchebo went full force with a complete redesign of its welcome experience including a newly designed Hospitality Lounge. The spacious room, which used to be the gift store, was designed by interior design company Adriana Hoyos and Hoy Stark Architects. The décor has a contem-

porary, yet relaxing and cozy feel with unique photographs of Aruba's and Manchebo's history and artwork by local renowned artist Elisa Lejuez.

"Bill's Hospitality Lounge" is named after Bill Croona, chairman of the resort's board and leader of the resort's recent rejuvenation journey. The chic and tasteful lounge serves as a relaxing area, a place to refresh for a late flight or to get some work done, all in an inviting ambience. "This lounge adds another level of bou-



ture to the property as our guests love to be pampered at their home away from home on majestic Eagle Beach," says Edgar Roelofs, general manager of Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa.

Nestled on Aruba's Eagle Beach for almost 55 years the 72-room luxury boutique resort is renowned for offering romantic, rejuvenating, and culinary vacation experiences to its clientele. Visit their website: www.manchebo.com for more information. □

Aruba leads as a country in the Caribbean with the highest vaccinations per 100 inhabitants

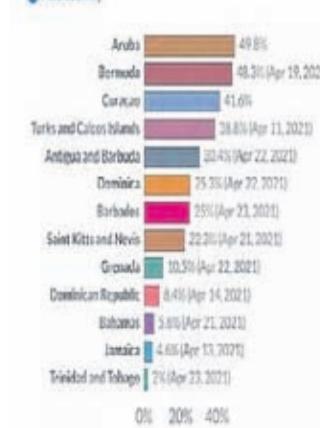
ORANJESTAD - According to ourworldindata.org, Aruba leads as a country in the Caribbean with the highest vaccines administered per 100 inhabitants.

Aruba's recovery appears to be on the right track. Tourists are excited to travel again and are looking for a travel destination where a high percentage of their population has been vaccinated. A destination where they can be sure that the spread of the virus is limited or minimal. Aruba is now the island in the Caribbean with the highest number of people vaccinated per 100 inhabitants and ranks second in the world as the best vaccinated country. This is certainly reason enough to be proud as a country and also encourages those who have not yet received their vaccine to get vaccinated as soon as possible. The sooner we achieve collective immunity between 75% and 85% of the community, the

sooner we can start restoring our tourism and economy. Since April 28, 2021, you do not have to wait for an appointment to receive your vaccine. Those who have not received their first vaccine can register on the Aruba Health App or at www.dvg.aw or www.arubacovid19.org and just walk in to the vaccination site at the Santa Teresita Center or the Centro Libertador Betico Croes for their first vaccine. People who cannot register on an online platform can walk into the vaccination centers, register and receive their vaccine right away. For the second vaccine, it is important to get it on the scheduled date. So far, Aruba has reached 54% of its 18 and older target of being vaccinated and anyone over 18 who has not yet received their vaccine is encouraged to get their vaccine as soon as possible just by walking in, to register and get vaccinated and assist in the recovery process of our island. □



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Jan 10, 2021 Apr 25, 2021



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Dec 15, 2020 Apr 25, 2021

Remembering Alex Nieuwmeyer, Managing Director of Divi Resorts Aruba

Visionary and celebrated hotelier leaves behind a legacy of community and service



ORANJESTAD – Alex Nieuwmeyer, Managing Director of Divi Resorts Aruba passed away on the 26 of April 2021 in Aruba at the age of 69. As Managing Director for Divi Resorts Aruba, Nieuwmeyer oversaw five properties on the island of Aruba, with a special focus on the Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives. A visionary leader and preeminent hotelier in Aruba, Nieuwmeyer spearheaded the success of Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives and leaves behind an extraordinary legacy of personal relationships, community service and stewardship.

Nieuwmeyer's 27-year tenure was the driving force behind the properties' continued success. With incredible attention to detail, Nieuwmeyer's vision is reflected in every touchpoint of Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives, including design, culinary offerings, guest experiences, programming and more. Nieuwmeyer is most remembered for being hands-on in all aspects of the resorts' daily operations, as well as long-term initiatives, and his commitment to the resorts is most apparent in his leadership style. A

beloved and respected figurehead of the 'Divi family,' Nieuwmeyer always took time to mentor team members, some of whom stayed with the resorts for over twenty years and went on to leadership roles within the company. Most recently, he ushered the resorts through the COVID-19 pandemic without having to lay off a single employee, while successfully completing a multi-million-dollar renovation of the Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusive guestrooms.

In addition, both properties have received numerous awards and accolades under Nieuwmeyer's stewardship, including the Islands All Inclusive Awards, TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence, Hotels.com Loved by Guests Award and Family Vacation Critic Award. Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives also recently received Gold in the Travel Weekly Magellan Awards for its eco-friendly and green initiatives, a passion project championed by Nieuwmeyer.

Through his unwavering dedication and singular vision, Nieuwmeyer's name has become synon-

ymous with Divi Resorts. His commitment to the properties as both a company and a family is felt by the team and its guests, as well as the entire island of Aruba and beyond. Throughout his time working for Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives, Nieuwmeyer established himself as a pivotal community member and was often called upon by the Aruban government to assist with island-wide initiatives and projects. Nieuwmeyer was an active participant in numerous groups including the Board of Directors of Aruba Hospitality and Tourism Association, serving as President for a period.

Most recently, Nieuwmeyer received a plaque on behalf of the Aruba government presented by D. Oduber, the Aruba Minister of Tourism, Public Health & Transport for his hard work and dedication to the island and tourism industry. Nieuwmeyer will also be honored by the Aruba Minister of Tourism in an upcoming inauguration to celebrate his life's achievements. Aside from his achievements with the Aruba Minister of Tourism, Nieuwmeyer was awarded the Order of Orange-Nassau, a knighthood on behalf of the Dutch King, in 2020.

Born in Amsterdam to a family with a background in the medical field, Nieuwmeyer forged his own path by pursuing a career in hospitality and tourism. He studied at the Hotel Management School Maastricht in Limburg, The Netherlands before spending time in New York City as the general manager at the five-star boutique hotel, Doral Park Avenue and in Boston as a successful restaurant owner of Devon on the Common. The skillset he developed as both a general manager and restaurateur in the United States were brought with him to his role at Divi Resorts in Aruba. His extensive experience was key in the successful expansion of the all-inclusive restaurant offerings at the Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives, as well as the opening of some of the island's most acclaimed restaurants, including Windows on Aruba and Fusion Restaurant Wine and Piano bar.

Outside of work, Nieuwmeyer was a skilled sailor and also an accomplished artist with many of his works displayed throughout Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives. Nieuwmeyer is survived by his wife, Barbara, and children Jessica and Zoey. A private funeral ceremony is to be held for family and friends.

For those who wish to send condolences, they can do so online at www.memoriesforalexnieuwemeyer.com.

The Alhambra ballroom will be open for Divi Resorts and Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusives team members to sign a condolence register and pay their respect between 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 30. In addition, a driving procession will also take place on the morning of Friday, April 30 beginning at 8:30 a.m. with stops at Divi Aruba Phoenix Beach Resort, Alhambra Casino and Shops, Divi Aruba All Inclusive, Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusive, Divi Village Golf & Beach Resort and Divi Dutch Village Resort for team members to pay their respects. □

McDonald's comes roaring back as restrictions ease

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Business Writer

The bounce back for McDonald's as restrictions were lifted across the U.S. was so strong in the first quarter that the company surpassed sales during the same period even in 2019, long before the pandemic broadsided the country.

McDonald's revenue jumped 9% to \$5.1 billion for the January-March period, better than most had expected.

Last year at this time stores were closing globally as the world sheltered from spiking COVID-19 infections, so an improvement in sales during the same stretch this year was expected. How easily it topped 2019's first-quarter sales of \$4.95 billion, however, was not.

U.S. same-store sales, or sales at locations open at least a year, rose 13.6% in the January-March period. Fewer diners visited, and many dining rooms remain closed. But those who did visit ordered more, with many picking up food for the entire family rather than for one person.

A new round of federal stimulus checks likely boosted first quarter sales, said McDonald's U.S. President Joe Erlinger said. New products,



A thank you sign sits in front of a McDonald's restaurant, Tuesday, April 27, 2021, in Waukee, Iowa.

including a long-awaited crispy chicken sandwich and spicy nuggets, also outperformed, he said.

"The positivity we saw in the first quarter was way beyond just the stimulus checks," Erlinger said during a conference call Thursday with investors.

Drive-thru windows available in nearly all U.S. stores remain a competitive advantage. McDonald's said around 90% of its U.S. sales

came through drive-thru windows in the first quarter, up from around 70% before the pandemic. The company has made multiple changes to speed drive-thru times, including a more simple menu.

Demand for delivery has spiked for McDonald's as well and is now available at 75% of its stores worldwide.

Delivery orders tend to be larger than in-store orders. The trick for McDonald's

will be to keep that sales momentum going even as more U.S. dining rooms reopen and customers return to pre-pandemic habits.

CEO Chris Kempczinski said the company's experience in Australia and Japan indicates that even as dining rooms reopen, demand for drive-thru and delivery will remain elevated.

A new loyalty program currently being tested in the U.S. and Germany and

Associated Press

celebrity meal deals could also boost sales as the year progresses, he said. McDonald's plans to launch a meal collaboration with the South Korean pop group BTS in 50 countries on May 26.

McDonald's expects its U.S. same-store sales to continue to outpace 2019 levels in the second quarter.

Worldwide, same-store sales rose 7.5%, well above the 5% gain analysts forecast. Strong sales in China and Japan helped offset softness in France and Germany, the company said. About half of Europe's dining rooms remain closed, and drive-thru is less prevalent in that market. Sales are also suffering in tourist-dependent markets like Italy and Spain, Kempczinski said. He said McDonald's is hopeful that vaccine passports might help reopen travel in Europe this summer.

Net income rose 39% to \$1.5 billion. Adjusted for one-time items, the company earned \$1.92 per share, easily beating Wall Street's forecast of \$1.81, according to analysts polled by FactSet.

McDonald's shares rose less than 1% to \$234.38 Thursday. □

Merchants sue Federal Reserve over fees for debit cards

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Two trade groups representing

businesses in North Dakota filed a lawsuit Thursday against the Federal Reserve, asking the agency

to lower its 10-year-old cap on "swipe" fee banks charge to process debit card transactions.

The lawsuit, filed by the North Dakota Retail Association and the North Dakota Petroleum Marketers Association in U.S. District Court in Bismarck, North Dakota, argues that the agency failed to follow instructions outlined by federal law and said it should abandon the rule that caps those fees at 21 cents for cards from the largest U.S. banks. The suit comes as the popularity of debit cards has surged, and retailers have paid billions of dollars more than Congress intended while banks' costs have dropped. The lawsuit argues the cap is

higher than allowed under the Durbin Amendment, a law passed by Congress in 2010 to address soaring swipe fees set by Visa and Mastercard and lack of competition among the card-issuing banks that receive the fees. The amendment set a standard for interchange fees that was supposed to be reasonable and proportional to the cost incurred by the issuer regarding the transaction, the lawsuit said.

"Those fees have become a lush profit center for issuers— contrary to Congress's express instructions in 2010," the lawsuit contends.

The lawsuit says the bank fees ultimately lead to

higher costs for retailers and higher prices for consumers.

"The Fed allowed fees that were much too high in the first place," National Retail Federation Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel Stephanie Martz in a statement.

"Retailers are paying twice what they should and these fees ultimately drive up prices paid by the public. Banks should not be handed a growing windfall at the expense of Main Street stores and consumers."

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, is not a plaintiff in the suit, but Martz is co-counsel in the case. □



In this Thursday, Nov. 28, 2013, file photo, a woman pays by credit card while checking out at a retail store in Colma, Calif.

Associated Press

EXPLAINER: No ransomware silver bullet, crooks out of reach

By FRANK BAJAK

AP Technology Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Political hand-wringing in Washington over Russia's hacking of federal agencies and interference in U.S. politics has mostly overshadowed a worsening digital scourge with a far broader wallop: crippling and dispiriting extortionary ransomware attacks by cybercriminal mafias that mostly operate in foreign safe havens out of the reach of Western law enforcement.

Stricken in the United States alone last year were more than 100 federal, state and municipal agencies, upwards of 500 health care centers, 1,680 educational institutions and untold thousands of businesses, according to the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft. Dollar losses are in the tens of billions. Accurate numbers are elusive. Many victims shun reporting, fearing the reputational blight.

All the while, ransomware gangsters have become more brazen and cocky as they put more and more lives and livelihoods at risk. This week, one syndicate threatened to make available to local criminal gangs data they say they stole from the Washington, D.C., metro police on informants. Another recently offered to share data purloined from corporate victims with Wall Street inside traders. Cybercriminals have even reached out directly to people whose personal info was harvested from third parties to pressure victims to pay up.

"In general, the ransomware actors have gotten more bold and more ruthless," said Allan Liska, an analyst with the cybersecurity firm Recorded Future.

On Thursday, a public-private task force including Microsoft, Amazon, the National Governors Association, the FBI, Secret Service and Britain and Canada's elite crime agencies delivered to the White House an 81-page urgent action plan for an aggressive and comprehensive whole-of-government assault on ransomware.



In this April 2, 2021, file photo, Washington Metropolitan Police Department chief Robert Contee speaks during a news conference in Washington.

Associated Press

At the report's online launch, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a pre-recorded video that the White House is developing a plan for disrupting ransomware and his department "will work to implement many of (the panel's) recommendations, because one thing is clear: Ransomware is a threat to our national security."

Mayorkas last month announced a DHS ransomware initiative, and the Department of Justice has just created a task force to tackle the scourge.

WHERE DID RANSOMWARE COME FROM? HOW DOES IT WORK?

The criminal syndicates that dominate the ransomware business are mostly Russian-speaking and operate with near impunity out of Russia and allied countries. They are a continuation and refinement — ransomware was barely a blip three years ago — of more than two decades of cyber-thieving that spammed, stole credit cards and identities and emptied bank accounts. The syndicates have grown in sophistication and skill, leveraging dark web forums to organize and recruit while hiding their identities and movements with tools like the Tor browser and cryptocurrencies that make payments — and their laundering — harder to track.

Ransomware scrambles a victim organization's data with encryption. The criminals leave instructions on infected computers for how to negotiate ransom payments and, once paid, provide software decryption keys.

Last year, ransomware crooks expanded into data-theft blackmail. Before triggering encryption, they quietly exfiltrate sensitive files and threaten to expose them publicly unless ransoms are paid. Victims who diligently backed up their networks as a hedge against ransomware now had to think twice about refusing to pay. At the end of 2019, only one ransomware group had an extortion site online that would publish such files. Now more than two dozen do.

Victims who refuse to pay can incur costs that far exceed the ransoms they might have negotiated. It happened recently to the University of Vermont Health Network. It suffered an estimated \$1.5 million a day in losses in the two months it took to recover. More than 5,000 hospital computers, their data scrambled into gibberish, had to be wiped clean and reconstituted from backed-up data.

The University of California-San Francisco, heavily involved in COVID-19 research, barely hesitated before paying. It gave the

criminals \$1.1 million last June. Manufacturers have been especially hard-hit this year, with ransoms of \$50 million demanded of computer makers Acer and Quanta, a major supplier of Apple laptops.

HOW ARE THESE CRIMINALS ORGANIZED?

Some top ransomware criminals fancy themselves software service professionals. They take pride in their "customer service," providing "help desks" that assist paying victims in file decryption. And they tend to keep their word. They have brands to protect, after all. "If they stick to their promises, future victims will be encouraged to pay up," Maurits Lucas, director of intelligence solutions at the cybersecurity firm Intel471, told a webinar earlier this year. "As a victim you actually know their reputation."

The business tends to be compartmentalized. An affiliate will identify, map out and infect targets, choose victims and deploy ransomware that is typically "rented" from a ransomware-as-a-service provider. The provider gets a cut of the payout, the affiliate normally taking more than three-quarters. Other subcontractors may also get a slice. That can include the authors of the malware used to break into victim networks and the people running the so-called "bul-

letproof domains" behind which the ransomware gangs hide their "command-and-control" servers. Those servers manage the remote sowing of malware and data extraction ahead of activation, a stealthy process that can take weeks.

WHY DO RANSOMS KEEP CLIMBING? HOW CAN THEY BE STOPPED?

In Thursday's report, the task force says it would be wrong to try to ban ransom payments, largely because "ransomware attackers continue to find sectors and elements of society that are woefully under-prepared for this style of attack."

The task force recognizes that paying up can be the only way for an afflicted business to avoid bankruptcy. Worse, the sophisticated cybercriminals often have done their research and know a victim's cybersecurity insurance coverage limit. They've been known to mention it in negotiations.

That degree of criminal savvy helped drive average ransom payments to more than \$310,000 last year, up 171% from 2019, according to Palo Alto Networks, a task force member.

Not surprisingly, the still-young cyber-insurance industry is reeling. Premiums have gone up by 50% to 100% in the past year as ransomware became the No. 1 claim, said Michael Phillips, chief claims officer of Resilience Insurance and a co-chair of the task force. On average, cyber-insurance claim payouts can now exceed 70% of what is paid in premiums — prompting some insurers to drop this type of insurance altogether, industry reports show.

The multi-pronged response to ransomware proposed by the task force will require the kind of concerted diplomatic, legal and law enforcement cooperation with key allies that the Trump administration shunned, displacing what the authors call the current "uncoordinated, disjointed" response. □

Satellites show world's glaciers melting faster than ever

BY SETH BORENSTEIN

Glaciers are melting faster, losing 31% more snow and ice per year than they did 15 years earlier, according to three-dimensional satellite measurements of all the world's mountain glaciers. Scientists blame human-caused climate change. Using 20 years of recently

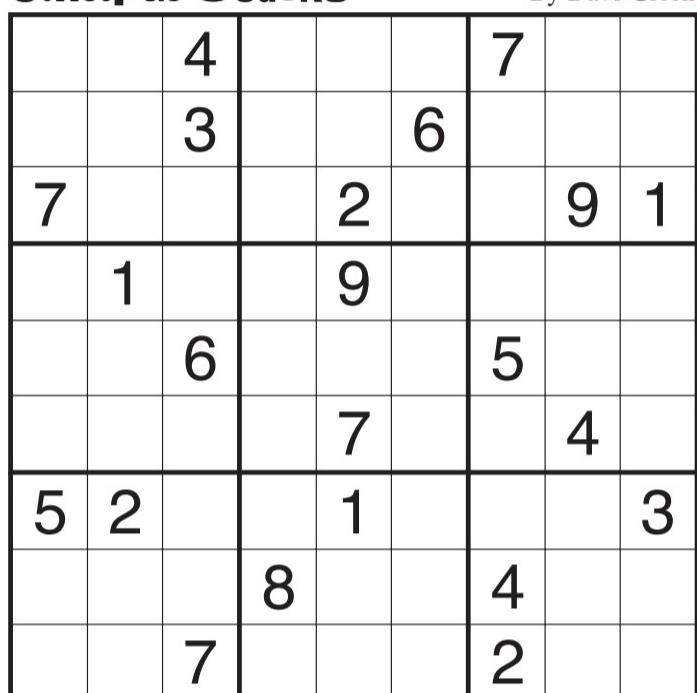
declassified satellite data, scientists calculated that the world's 220,000 mountain glaciers are losing more than 328 billion tons (298 billion metric tons) of ice and snow per year since 2015, according to a study in Wednesday's journal Nature. That's enough melt flowing into the world's

rising oceans to put Switzerland under almost 24 feet (7.2 meters) of water each year. The annual melt rate from 2015 to 2019 is 78 billion more tons (71 billion metric tons) a year than it was from 2000 to 2004. Global thinning rates, different than volume of water lost, doubled in the last 20 years and "that's enormous," said

Romain Hugonet, a glaciologist at ETH Zurich and the University of Toulouse in France who led the study. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★★

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Review: Family and robots in 'The Mitchells vs. the Machines'

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

Easily the most heartfelt movie about family life that also includes a robot apocalypse and a pug often mistaken for a loaf of bread, "The Mitchells vs. the Machines" is an antic, irreverent animated delight that somehow doesn't sacrifice depth even as it hurtles forward at breakneck comic speed.

Director Mike Rianda's film, produced by Phil Lord and Chris Miller, shares much of the DNA of Lord and Miller's other cartoon adventures ("The Lego Movie," "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse") in its ability to remake movie clichés with madcap irreverence, youthful zeal and a contemporaneity that often eludes less free-wheeling films.

"The Mitchells vs. the Machines," which debuts Friday on Netflix (after originally being set for theatrical release from Sony Pictures), manages to spin through a sincere father-daughter relationship, our technology addictions, Instagram jealousy and general feelings of inadequacy while breezing through an end-of-the-world plot accidentally initiated by a reckless tech



This image released by Netflix shows a scene from "The Mitchells vs. the Machines."

Associated Press

CEO. Oh, there are maniacal Furby's, too.

But for all its fast-paced zaniness, "The Mitchells vs. the Machines," scripted by Rianda and his writing partner Jeff Rowe (also co-director), is basically a good old-fashioned family road trip movie, and the Mitchells slide in somewhere between the Griswolds and a more accident-prone Incredibles. They're neither a hopeless clan nor a perfect one (usually the only two options in family movies), but a flawed, loving family. Rick Mitchell (Danny Mc-

Bride) is a devoted but distracted dad who, when faced with more complicated emotional issues, happily retreats to home improvement and woodworking. He and wife Linda (Maya Rudolph) have a daughter heading to college, Katie (Abbi Jacobson), a younger dinosaur-crazed boy named Aaron (Michael Rianda) and a dog named Doug the Pug — a four-legged running gag. They all have their own interests but share a common smart-phone addiction. So when Rick sug-

gests a dinner with "10 seconds of unobstructed family eye contact," it's excruciating torture for everyone. When Katie is about to leave for college, her relationship with her father has reached a low point. Katie, an insanely creative budding filmmaker, can't ever get him to pay attention to her creations. In a last-ditch stab at bringing them closer, Rick cancels her flight and the family drives across the country instead. Part of what's great about "The Mitchells vs. the Machines" is that, even though

it's a big-budget computer-generated animation, it pulses with a hand-drawn, DIY spirit. Along the way, Katie is filming and her work frequently bleeds into the movie, itself, redecorating the frame and sometimes taking it over. "The Mitchells vs. the Machines" is simultaneously an ode to the creative possibilities at our finger tips and a warning to the greater dangers of digital dependence.

The latter is especially true once a newly launched phone turns diabolical overlord and scoops up the world's population with little more than promises of free Wi-Fi. The Mitchells, by luck and pluck, are the only ones to go undetected, a success owed less to their intelligence than their imperfections. The engulfing dystopia makes for a dramatic and metaphorical backdrop for the Mitchells to work through their issues. What, after all, is more apocalyptic for a father than a daughter leaving home for college?

Rianda's film drags some in the big finale as the Mitchells go to battle in Silicon Valley.

The mom, and Rudolph, are a little wasted. □

Burning Man cancels 2021 festival in northern Nevada desert



In this Sept. 3, 2016, file photo, attendees are silhouetted as the structure of the "Man" burns during Burning Man at the Black Rock Desert of Gerlach, Nev., north of Reno.

Associated Press

By SCOTT SONNER

RENO, Nev. (AP) — Burning Man organizers announced Tuesday they are canceling this summer's annual counter-culture festival in the Nevada desert

for the second year in a row because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The San Francisco-based group posted a video on its website that said there are too many uncertainties to

resolve in time to hold the event as scheduled Aug. 26 to Sept. 3 in the Black Rock Desert 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of Reno. Burning Man CEO Marian Goodell said the "difficult decision" is "based on the best information available to us."

"We know the need for community has never been stronger. And building community is what Burners do best. We also recognize the pandemic is not over," she said. "We have decided to focus our energy on building Black Rock City 2022."

The Reno Gazette Journal first reported the news Tuesday on its website. The decision was based on a combination of factors, not a single issue, the group said.

"Although here in the United States we may be feeling the weight lifting and the light at the end of the tunnel brightening, we are still in the pandemic, and the uncertainties that need to be resolved are impossible to resolve in the time we have," the statement said.

Goodell said earlier this month they were considering requiring attendees to prove they have been vaccinated for COVID-19 if they went forward with plans to hold the event. The organizers backed off an earlier statement indicating that they had already decided to make the shots mandatory.

The 35-year-old festival that draws as many as 80,000 people to the desert had planned on capping at-

tendance at about 69,000 this year.

Goodell said they still intend to host local events around the world in conjunction with the week that typically leads up to Labor Day and culminates with the burning of a large wooden effigy.

"We're not canceling Burning Man. We're just not doing Black Rock City," she said Tuesday. "We are going to celebrate 'Burn Week' on line and off line." □

2	6	4	1	8	9	7	3	5
1	9	3	7	5	6	8	2	4
7	8	5	3	2	4	6	9	1
4	1	2	5	9	8	3	7	6
3	7	6	2	4	1	5	8	9
8	5	9	6	7	3	1	4	2
5	2	8	4	1	7	9	6	3
9	3	1	8	6	2	4	5	7
6	4	7	9	3	5	2	1	8

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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Ryan Miller's time: Ducks goalie to retire at end of season

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Ryan Miller smiled and choked up a bit when he considered how his career as the winningest American-born goalie in professional hockey history almost never happened.

When Miller first became fascinated with goaltending as a youngster growing up in Michigan, he says his father, Dean, gently tried to discourage him from putting on the pads and the mask.

"He knew how difficult it could be to stand there," Miller said Thursday. "But I felt like it was the spot for me."

Three decades later, Miller has decided to enjoy the fruits of a lifetime spent meticulously preparing for his next game and his opponents' next shot.

The Anaheim Ducks goalie will retire at the conclusion of the season, ending his 18-year NHL career and a decorated tenure in international hockey as one of the greatest Americans to play the position.

"A skinny kid from the middle of Michigan was able to work at something and represent the country a couple of times and make a career out of hockey," Miller said during an emotional farewell news conference attended virtually by his family and many hockey friends.

"My situation goes to show with some dedication, you can set your sights and you can accomplish something. If (young players) have looked to me as inspiring, that makes me feel good. If they could take a moment where I was on the ice and use it to build



Anaheim Ducks goalie Ryan Miller (30) looks on during the first period of an NHL hockey game against the Buffalo Sabres in Buffalo, N.Y., in this Sunday, Feb. 9, 2020, file photo.

Associated Press

something for themselves, that makes me feel really good."

Miller has played 794 games for Buffalo, Vancouver, St. Louis and Anaheim, where he has spent the past four seasons primarily as John Gibson's backup. Miller won the Vezina Trophy in 2010 as the NHL's best goaltender with the Sabres.

Miller passed John Vanbiesbrouck's career wins record for an American-born goalie in February 2019 with Anaheim. With a career 390-289-87 record and a .914 save percentage, Miller ranks second among Americans behind Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick with 44 shutouts, and second behind Vanbiesbrouck in games played.

Miller is 14th overall on the NHL's victories list, 12th in saves (21,621) and 19th in

games played.

Miller also had an accomplished international career highlighted by his play at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, where he was named the most valuable player and best goaltender. He went 5-1 with a .946

save percentage while leading the U.S. team to a silver medal, but Canada won gold with Sidney Crosby's famed overtime goal. The Michigan State product and Hobey Baker Award winner also has been named the top goaltender in the NCAA and in the AHL, making him the only goalie in hockey history to pair those two honors with his Vezina Trophy and his Olympic laurels.

It's an impressive list of accomplishments for a goalie who could have played forward like his brother, former Ducks forward Drew

Miller, and three cousins — Kip, Kelly and Kevin Miller — who also made the NHL.

But the cerebral, obsessive kid simply couldn't resist the lure of the crease. Miller says he loved the often-thankless position from the start.

"I was very concerned about our end of the game on defense, and I thought I could make a difference back there," Miller recalled. "I think some people have a knack for things, and they might get close to all that aligning for them, but they don't get to that point, I consider myself lucky. I found something I loved to do, and my personality aligned with the position, and I was able to carve it out."

Miller's NHL teams made seven playoff appearances, where he posted three shutouts and a 2.52 goals-

against average over 57 games. His greatest team success occurred early in his 12 years with Buffalo when he backstopped the Sabres to the Eastern Conference finals in 2006 and 2007.

"Buffalo is always going to have a big part of my heart," Miller said. "I feel like I really grew up there."

The current Ducks will miss the playoffs for the third consecutive season, so Miller's career will end May 8. Anaheim's final two home games are this weekend.

Miller is retiring, but he isn't moving: He's staying in the Los Angeles area with his wife, actor Noureen DeWulf, and son Bodhi. Miller already lived close to the beach during the NHL offseason before he joined the Ducks, and his wife's successful Hollywood career made it easy to stay.

Being tied to Southern California limits Miller's immediate job prospects in hockey, but he said he is looking forward to the chance to "chill out a little bit." After that, he hopes to find a role in player development and ultimately team management.

There's one job he won't be taking any time soon as he starts to enjoy life without pads, however.

"I do feel like I have a bit of coaching inside of me, but I can't step out of an NHL schedule and into a worse schedule right now," Miller said with a laugh. "Those guys are here way more than the players, they travel as much, and they're on the hook for all the scouting and the preparations. I'm not touching that for a while." □

One-time transfer rule clears last NCAA step, starts in 2021

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The NCAA Division I Board of Directors ratified a rule change Wednesday that will allow all athletes who have not yet transferred the ability to do so one time in a college career and be immediately eligible to play.

The Division I Council adopted the proposed legislation earlier this month. The board took the

last step to make the historic rule change official and the NCAA clarified some of the details in a news release.

The one-time exception had been previously available to some athletes, just not those in football, basketball, baseball and men's ice hockey. Now it will be available to all athletes who have not yet transferred, starting with the

2021-22 academic year.

This year, the date for all athletes to notify their current schools that they intend to transfer is July 1. Those dates will shift to May 1 for fall and winter sport athletes and July 1 for spring sport athletes in subsequent years.

The one-time exception will count for athletes who transfer after graduating. Previously, NCAA

rules permitted athletes who had graduated to transfer and be immediately eligible.

Now, if an athlete has already used a one-time exception for a transfer as an undergraduate, the athlete is not automatically eligible as a graduate transfer. Athletes can still apply for a waiver to become eligible under certain circumstances. □

Column: Ruiz has heard the fat jokes, but comeback no joke

By TIM DAHLBERG
AP Sports Columnist

Andy Ruiz Jr. has heard all the fat jokes, and understands he has a reputation to rehabilitate.

The former heavyweight champion also knows his comeback fight Saturday night against 40-year-old Chris Arreola has been criticized both for the quality of opponent and the price fans will have to pay to watch it.

But entertainment is entertainment. And Ruiz promises there will be plenty of action on the pre-Cinco de Mayo weekend as he takes his first baby steps toward regaining the title he so unexpectedly won in a stunning stoppage of Anthony Joshua two years ago.

Yes, he was 310 pounds when he began training camp. But for \$49.95 those watching at home can tune in to see just how serious Ruiz is about becoming a force in the heavyweight division again.

"It's going to be an all action fight," the first heavyweight champion of Mexican heritage said. "All the Mexican fans are going to come and support us. The best way to watch this fight is being at home, watching on TV and celebrating."

Just how much there is to celebrate is debatable, considering Arreola is not exactly a prime-time opponent. But comebacks have to start somewhere, and this one will start in a pay-



Heavyweight boxer Andy Ruiz Jr. weighs in before a title bout against Anthony Joshua at Madison Square Garden in New York, in this Friday, May 31, 2019, file photo.

Associated Press

per-view against an aging fighter who is rugged and throws plenty of punches—but has won only two fights in five years and has had weight issues of his own.

It wouldn't be a proper comeback, of course, if it didn't come with a back story of redemption and renewal. Ruiz has that and more, including a new trainer and his engaging tale of what happened when he suddenly became the heavyweight champion of the world before and discovered he wasn't quite ready for prime time.

"I killed the old Andy and a new Andy was born," Ruiz said. "I have a lot to prove. I let a lot of people down, and that's why I had

to make big changes to myself. I know what I'm capable of doing and I know what I can accomplish. I have it inside of me to become the Mexican two-time heavyweight champion of the world."

The biggest mistake, according to Ruiz, is that he let the heavyweight championship get to his head. Hard to blame Ruiz for that, because few gave him a chance when he shocked everyone in boxing by stopping the previously undefeated British champion at Madison Square Garden. The scale at the rematch in December in Saudi Arabia told the tale better than anything.

Ruiz weighed a whopping

283.5 pounds for the fight, and his lack of conditioning and desire were both evident in dropping a lopsided decision to Joshua to lose the title in his first defense.

Now Ruiz has a new trainer, is some 60 pounds lighter than when he began training for Arreola, and has a new perspective on what it means to be a champion. He'll meet Arreola in a scheduled 12-round fight from the Dignity Health Sports Park in Carson, California, where a limited number of fans will be allowed because of pandemic restrictions.

"I didn't know what was coming my way. I didn't know what to expect," he

said about winning the title. "At the time I had cousins that I didn't even know, I had uncles and friends from a long time ago I didn't know until I won. So I kind of went with the flow and that was kind of my distraction. But we all learn from our mistakes. And I've got to start all over again, start back at the bottom of the ladder."

Ruiz isn't exactly at the bottom, but he's got a ways to go before reaching the top again. Joshua has moved on and is planning to fight two bouts against Tyson Fury this year, though they haven't been finalized, and the path to another heavyweight championship isn't exactly wide open.

But Ruiz says he's motivated now to win back what he once had, and has hooked up with Eddy Reynoso, the trainer of Canelo Alvarez, to help him stay disciplined. He also says he's learned a lot from being around Alvarez, widely considered to be the top pound-for-pound fighter in the world. But the 31-year-old had to learn a bit about himself, too. The partying had to go, and the overeating had to stop before he could be comfortable again in the ring.

"The main thing is we're learning discipline and that's something you cannot buy into," he said. "That's something you have to learn on your own and you have to want it. □

Giants pick up 5th-year contract option for Saquon Barkley



In this Sept. 14, 2020, file photo, New York Giants running back Saquon Barkley carries the ball during the third quarter against the Pittsburgh Steelers in an NFL football game in East Rutherford, N.J.

Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)

— The New York Giants picked up the fifth-year option on the rookie contract for running back Saquon Barkley.

The 2018 Offensive Rookie of the Year is recovering from a torn right ACL in Week 2 of last season.

Barkley, the No. 2 overall draft pick in 2018, ran for 1,307 yards that season and caught 91 passes for 721 yards. He had 15 touchdowns combined rushing and receiving. Barkley had 1,441 yards

from scrimmage in 2019, but missed three games because of a high ankle sprain.

He is hopeful to be ready for training camp this summer.

"Very excited," Barkley told The Associated Press during the winter. "Obviously things were a little shaky in the beginning of the year. ... I got hurt, they started getting things clicking and I think you saw when we got the running game going, we were very hard to beat. When you have

a great running game, a great defense and a great quarterback and talent all around, which I believe we have, we can take that middle portion toward the end of the season when we played some of our best ball and start off with that, I think we're going to be in a very good place."

The Giants finished 6-10 in 2020, but barely missed winning the weak NFC East that Washington took at 7-9. Barkley now will earn a fully guaranteed \$7.217 million in 2022. □